



NEWS

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FCC POLICIES THAT DAMAGED MEDIA NOW THREATENING INTERNET

Commissioner Copps Asks in Speech "Is The Internet As We Know It Dying?"

Commissioner Michael J. Copps, in a speech at the New America Foundation, today warned that: "The Internet as we know it is at risk. Entrenched interests are positioning themselves to control the network's chokepoints and they are lobbying the FCC to aid and abet them. The Internet was designed to prevent government or a corporation or anyone else from controlling it. But this original vision of the Internet may soon be lost. In its place a warped view that open networks should be replaced by closed networks and that accessibility can be superseded by a new power to discriminate is emerging."

Copps continued: "Our ill-advised Internet policy is only one piece of a tectonic shift across the whole range of FCC issues. From media to telecom to the Internet, we appear to be rushing toward breathtaking regulatory alterations. The Commission is permitting, even encouraging, competition to wither in the face of centralization. It is short changing its responsibility to protect the public interest."

The FCC may soon implement fundamental regulatory changes that would have deep and lasting effects on consumers, innovators, and business users. Copps: "Until now the big corporations that control Internet bottlenecks have been unable fully to capitalize on this power. But now we face scenarios wherein those with bottleneck control will be able to discriminate against both users and content providers that they don't have commercial relationships with, don't share the same politics with, or just don't want to offer access to for any reason at all. From the not so distant shadows of the past, old attitudes favoring industry consolidation and limited access are again seeking to reestablish themselves."

At issue are upcoming decisions at the FCC that will determine how much control companies will have over Internet access and their ability to discriminate against users, data, websites, or technologies. In the dial-up world, current protections require these companies to treat everyone equally. This equal treatment has contributed to enormous growth and innovation on the Internet. These decisions come on the heels of the FCC eliminating related media concentration protections. A federal court has stayed that decision, and Congress is now debating reversing it. In addition, on Monday, another federal court overturned aspects of the FCC's cable broadband policy.